

23 February 2026 | Toronto, Canada – The International Federation on Ageing (IFA) is pleased to announce the launch of Shingles Action Week in Canada, taking place from 23 February to 1 March 2026. Building on the success of the inaugural campaign, Shingles Action Week 2026 aims to raise awareness of shingles as a vaccine-preventable disease and to promote tangible actions to improve access, uptake, and equity in shingles vaccination across Canada, including public funding in all provinces and territories aligned with the full extent of National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommendations.

Shingles is a painful viral infection caused by the reactivation of the varicella-zoster virus, which remains dormant in the body following an initial chickenpox infection.(1) While anyone who has had chickenpox is at risk, the likelihood of shingles increases with age and in the presence of chronic or immunocompromising conditions.(1)

In Canada, one in three adults aged 65 and older lives with at least two chronic conditions, a figure that rises to one in two among those aged 85 and older.(2) Each year, an estimated 130,000 Canadians experience shingles, with approximately half of all cases occurring among adults aged 50 and over- who are also more likely to experience prolonged pain, functional decline, and other complications.(3)

The impact of shingles can be significant and long-lasting, affecting daily activities, independence, and quality of life. As one individual who had shingles shared: *“Shingles can be quite debilitating, and people need to be aware of that. People like to think that they’re not going to get it; but if you do - especially the older you get - the harder it is to deal with it.”*

Despite the substantial burden of shingles, publicly funded access to vaccination remains uneven across Canada. In Ontario, routine public funding is currently limited to adults aged 65–70 years, whereas NACI recommends vaccination for immunocompetent adults aged 50 and older.(4) Provincial and territorial programs differ in eligibility and scope, and some jurisdictions, such as British Columbia and Saskatchewan, do not offer routine publicly funded coverage for the general adult population.(5,6) This inconsistency creates access barriers and leaves many adults at increased risk without affordable protection.

Aligning programs more closely with national recommendations would be an important step toward reducing preventable illness and advancing equity in healthy ageing. In this context, Shingles Action Week 2026 seeks to address this gap by engaging individuals at risk, patient and advocacy organizations, and policymakers. IFA has developed a civil society organization (CSO) social media toolkit to help organizations raise awareness and mobilize advocacy action within their communities. The campaign also features video stories, a coordinated social media campaign throughout the week, and accessible educational content highlighting risk, prevention, and the importance of vaccination. Together, these efforts are designed to support informed decision-making and advance healthy ageing through prevention.

By raising awareness of the risks associated with shingles and the importance of vaccination, IFA aims for Shingles Action Week to serve as a catalyst for increased individual and collective action, as well as stronger policy attention to expanding publicly funded shingles vaccination for those at highest risk across Canada, including older adults and those with underlying chronic conditions.

To learn more about Shingles Action Week in Canada visit <https://vaccines4life.com/engage/saw2026/> and explore the IFA social media platforms @IFAgeing.

References

1. World Health Organization. World Health Organization. 2025 [cited 2026 Feb 3]. Shingles (herpes zoster). Available from: [https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/shingles-\(herpes-zoster\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/shingles-(herpes-zoster))
2. Government of Canada. Government of Canada. 2020. Aging and chronic diseases: A profile of Canadian seniors.
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4. Ministry of Health. 2025. Shingles Vaccination. Available from: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/shingles-vaccine>
5. HealthLinkBC. 2023. Shingles Vaccine. <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/shingles-vaccine>
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